



March 4, 2024

The Honorable Eloise Gomez Reyes
California State Assembly District 50
1021 O Street, Suite 4510
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: AB 1842 (Reyes) Health care coverage: Medication-assisted treatment - Support

Dear Assemblymember Reyes,

On behalf of the California State Association of Psychiatrists (CSAP), I write to you in support of AB 1842, which would prohibit commercial health insurers from imposing prior authorization rules that create barriers for medication assisted treatment (MAT).

AB 1842 is urgently needed to address the current overdose crisis in our state. Almost 11,000 Californians died in 2021 as a result of a preventable drug overdose. Overdoses are now killing more people than lung cancer, diabetes, and more than two-times car accidents. Further, the overdose death rate for teenagers has increased by 370% since 2017, while rates for African Americans, Latinos and Native Americans have increased by 208%, 201% and 150% respectively. In addition, another 19,000 Californians died that same year due to excessive alcohol use.

Medications such as buprenorphine or long-acting naltrexone can dramatically improve treatment for many substance use disorders by treating craving and withdrawal symptoms. However, MAT is grossly underused. Almost two-thirds of commercially insured persons in California with drug dependence or alcohol dependence do not initiate treatment. Prior authorization requirements can create unnecessary barriers that delay or interrupt access to effective treatment.

Skyrocketing overdose rates represent a public health emergency, demanding new strategies of response, including the removal of unnecessary barriers to effective treatment. AB 1842 is an important first step that will reduce overdose rates and save lives.

For these reasons, CSAP is pleased to support AB 1842.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Yoder', is positioned below the 'Sincerely,' text.

Paul Yoder
Legislative Advocate

CC: Chair and Members, Assembly Health Committee